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ABSTRACT

Structuring the initial teacher employment interview adds validity to selection and appropriately utilizes human resources. Five aspects of an effective interview program include: (1) developing a job analysis plan; (2) reviewing the applications; (3) planning for the interview; (4) the interview instrument; and (5) legal implications. An interview chart should include a "task analysis" developed from key duties. A well-developed application form, rather than resumes, assists in obtaining data. Before the interview, a principal should have an application letter, completed district application, resume, placement papers, and official transcripts. Information should include current employment, previous successful related experience, related quality academic work, and a phone check of references. "Information giving" involves restating the job description; describing the district, community, and school; and providing information about salary and work. "Information receiving" includes reviewing pre-interview data, checking past job performance, assessing work attitudes, and giving the opportunity to communicate skills. A model instrument (appended to this document) assists in seeking consistent information from candidates and in establishing priorities. During preselective planning, federal legislation to keep in mind includes affirmative action concepts, age discrimination, equal pay work contracts, sexual discrimination, and handicap discrimination. Interviewers should understand "primae facie" evidence, unlawful inquiries, and state laws. Tailoring the interview provides reliability and mutual legal protection, and attracts better professionals to education. (AA)

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TAILORING THE INTERVIEW PROCESS FOR MORE EFFECTIVE PERSONNEL SELECTION

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TAILORING THE INTERVIEW PROCESS

FOR MORE EFFECTIVE PERSONNEL SELECTION

Even though findings concerning the limited reliability and validity of the employment interview are well known, it continues to be a widely used technique in teacher selection. When choosing personnel the interview is about the only way one can see what the applicant looks like, of getting a check on their personality, of selling the organization to a promising applicant, of getting acquainted with them as a person, or simply to see if there is any type of "interactive chemistry" with this individual.

Business and industry have long recognized the importance of the investment concept in hiring new personnel. This, to a large extent, is due to the profit motive of private enterprise. We as educators must also be fully aware of the long-term effects new personnel have on the schools. With new legislation affecting retirement, districts may well be making a 50-year personnel investment in just one faculty member.

As a consequence, structuring or standardizing the initial interview is vital. Structural consistency adds to the validity of the selection process, which in actuality is a procedure for determining that very costly investment for the school. This investment is evident not only in monetary terms but in the consequences related to utilizing human resources appropriately. The following paragraphs briefly outline how an effective interview program might be developed.

STRUCTURING AN INTERVIEW PROGRAM

1. Developing a job analysis plan. When constructing a job analysis chart for the interview, job relevant, observable and measurable qualifications should be included as much as possible. A summary statement or "task analysis" of the position should be developed from a list of the key duties comprising that specific job. This assists in defining the legel parameters and provides a frame of reference in planning one portion of the interview questions. The skills needed to successfully implement the task areas will also need to be identified. Specific rather than general position guides should be used.

To control the input data from the candidate, it is recommended that the major approach in obtaining such information be through a well developed application form as opposed to relying too heavily upon individual resumes. Resumes vary considerably, are often open to interpretation because of differing styles and may not provide all the information a district wants or needs with respect to a specific position. Basing the interview on specifically tailored task analysis data provides basic legal protection for the district in instances where individuals appeal if they were not selected because of inconsistencies in the screening process.

2. Reviewing the applications. The data a principal should have on hand before scheduling any interview should include the following:

-- a letter of application
-- the district application form (completed)
-- applicant's resume
-- placement papers and official transcripts
-- test scores (if required)

NOTE: Be certain to check for discrepancies between the individual's paper qualifications and those required by the district, keeping the specific needs of that position as a focus.

Information needed in detailing questions for the interview should include most of the following:

-- Is the applicant currently employed--why are they interested in your institution? Do they state why they want to leave?
-- What previous successful related work experience have they had? Are their key skill areas identified?
-- What related quality academic work have they had?
-- Has a phone check been made by calling some of the key references? Letters often are written by friends and a majority will always be favorable. Secondary references are important in checking the data you have.
-- Are their professional goals cited on paper?
-- Have the test scores (if required) been analyzed and summarized in a usable format?
-- Can the applicant write an acceptable "letter of application"?

A thorough job in the pre-screening exercise saves considerable time and expense later by weeding out those who do not meet the basic employment requisites.

3. Planning for the interview. As indicated in the opening paragraph, employment interviews are not always the most valid predictors of teaching success. Too often school officials using unstructured techniques are influenced by unrelated performance or personality factors and tend to make recommendations based on "hunches" alone.

The prime objectives of the interview should be information giving, information receiving and checking on individual "chemistry".

Information giving includes restating the job description, describing the district and the specific program the individual is applying for, selling the school to a potentially strong candidate, describing the community, and providing information about salary, fringes and working expectations.

Information receiving includes the following:

a. review of pre-interview information--filling in gaps where data are missing or unclear
b. checking on past job performance
c. attitudes toward work, themselves and goals
d. professional/personal philosophies
e. evidence of self-confidence
f. allow candidate opportunity to communicate skills

Checking on individual "chemistry" is obviously a very subjective and difficult type of assessment to make. Still, extreme elements of personal characteristics do appear during interviews, and the negatives may well serve as warning signs with respect to that particular applicant.

4. The interview instrument. To add consistency and increase the validity of a personnel interview a specially tailored interview form should be used. A model instrument based on concepts discussed earlier has been developed based on concepts developed to assist interviewers in (1) seeking consistent information from different candidates, (2) providing a scoring system and profile for comparing candidates, (3) assisting in summarizing and establishing priorities based on the interview. The model form has been placed at the end of this article.

5. Legal implications. An important point to constantly keep in mind relative to interview questions are the legal principles involved. During pre-selective planning federal legislation affecting teacher selection includes:

-- affirmative action concepts
-- age discrimination
-- equal pay-equal work contracts
-- sexual discrimination
-- discrimination against handicapped individuals

Young and Ryerson indicate that individuals must "show primae facie evidence in their selection rights as protected class persons. Primae facie evidence can be established by one of the following doctrines:

a. Doctrine of disparate treatment. Individuals must show that the employer intended to discriminate on the basis of protected class status.

b. Doctrine of disparate impact. The actions rather than the intentions of the employer are considered."[1]

Often the term "actions" refers to the interview questions themselves. Certain inquiries are generally considered unlawful. Among these are:

-- color of skin
-- religious preference
-- ancestry, national origin
-- marriage status
-- disabilities--certain diseases

State laws vary with respect to other limitations. It behooves the interviewer to become familiar with the specific laws and related regulatory guidelines in their geographical and political areas.

SUMMARY

Structuring the initial interview process is a necessity. A job analysis plan is vital in assisting with the pre-screening of applicants, of developing an interview process and finally actually conducting the interview.

Tailoring or targeting the interview not only adds to the reliability and validity of the selection process, it also provides a certain degree of legal protection for both parties. Everyone supports the concept that we need to hire better professionals in education. Tailoring the interview program is one procedure that assists in achieving that goal.

[1]. Young, I. Phillip and Dean Ryerson. Teacher Selection: Legal, Practical, and Theoretical Aspects. (Monograph) Tempe, Arizona: UCEA (pp 2-5), 1986.

*Note: Preliminary information re degree, age, etc., may be on cover sheet for this instrument. Anthony Saville

EXAMPLE OF STRUCTURED SCORABLE INTERVIEW FORM*

RATINGS

NAME _____ DATE _____ PLACE _____

Pre-interview

1. Test Scores—if applicable 1. _____
2. Paper Qualifications—degree of appropriate professional preparation and quality of previous experience 2. _____
3. Potential—degree of potential success based upon written/oral recommendations 3. _____
4. Intention--why is interviewee applying for this position? 4. _____
5. Personal Chemistry—sincerity, commitment, personality 5. _____
6. Attitudes—toward work, self, students, the profession 6. _____
7. Oral Expression—ability to clearly respond to the questions--able to express own viewpoint 7. _____
8. Selling Ability—ability to sell self--poise, confidence, enthusiasm 8. _____
9. Knowledge—of the field, subject area, general knowledge 9. _____
10. Listening Skills—ability and willingness to listen to the questions, correctly interpret and answer them 10. _____

Total = _____

Average Score (x .10 if all 10 items used) = _____

OR

Average Score ($\frac{\text{Total}}{N}$ if 9 or less used) = _____

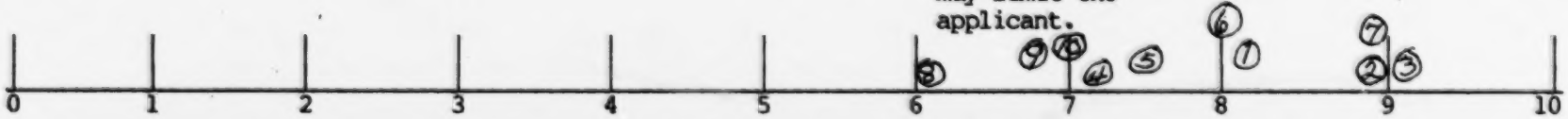
There is convincing evidence that the applicant does not possess these qualifications or characteristics. He/she is uniformly considered inferior with respect to others on these requirements.

The evidence suggests that the applicant does not possess enough of the requirements to perform the work adequately.

The evidence is mixed. There are indications that the applicant possesses the qualifications; however, the evidence does not indicate superiority, merely potential.

The evidence supports a judgement that the applicant possesses the qualifications/characteristics to an extent that it meets position demands. There is also evidence of some factors which may limit the applicant.

There is clear and convincing evidence that the applicant possesses these characteristics/qualifications and is judged superior. Rated as equal to a hypothetically strong employee in that position.



a. A profile of the scores may be obtained by placing the circled numbers of the items above on the scale at the bottom of the sheet. An example of the results from one interview is marked on this form.
b. Summary comments, signature of interviewer, etc., on back of form or additional sheet.